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SPIN OFF

Paul Bley abroad

Montreal has produced two of jazz's greatest pianists. One is the keyboard dynamo, Oscar Peterson, and the other the great romantic Paul Bley. Neither was able to find at home ears sensitive enough to recognize their tremendous talents, but after hitting the road they found success at every turn. Maybe Canadian content will bring them back home!

In the meantime, Bley has produced three albums of his music in solo, trio and quartet formations. They were recorded in Oslo, Norway, New York City and Seattle, Washington.

Paul Bley, Alone Again (Improvising Artists Inc.) is the solo album, recorded in Oslo in August, 1974. It features seven tunes — four by the pianist, three by wife Carla Bley and one by Annette Peacock. The music resembles very much that of Bley's '72 recording for ECM, **Open to Love.** It is full of romantic meanderings, tenderness, pathos and the softest moods. All the tempi are slow and played with a delicate inspired touch. Bley is a soloist par excellence who gives all his recordings intimacy, always seeming to play for an audience of one. He can fill the silence of solitude with beautiful company and tender care. His music is simple, direct and clean and lets the listener embroider his or her own dreams — a rare possibility in contemporary music.

Quiet Nights (Improvising Artists Inc.) is a trio recording featuring Bley, on piano, Bill Connors on guitar and Jimmy Giuffre on flute, clarinet and tenor sax. This is a poetic masterpiece, fascinating from the first to the last note, as pleasant to the spirit as it is to the ear.

The music is impressionistic, a collection of meditative sounds and reflective moods. The trio displays exceptional cohesion and a rare togetherness. Each musician has a special sense of peace and silence, each is gentle and expressive. This is more than just an excellent record, it's a musical blessing.

Turning Point (Improvising Artists Inc.) is a recording of 1964 and 1968 vintage, just released. Five tunes are by a quartet composed of Bley, piano; John Gilmore, tenor sax; Paul Motian, drums; and Gary Peacock, bass. All the quartet's compositions are by Paul or Carla Bley. The remaining two tunes, by Annette Peacock, feature a change in drummers to Billy Elgart, and the tenor sax is absent.

The music is of the abstract sort, featuring disembodied melodies and wandering freely all over the place. Experimental if you will. There are some interesting "rhythmic melodies," some fair inter-relationships and a lot of exploration.

The only problem is that I personally feel like giving the album something like "four stars and a yawn."

The solos are long and don't seem to get anywhere, but maybe that's the point. There are two "standard melodies" on the album by the ladies Peacock and Bley and although they are reasonably pleasant, there is nothing to write home about.

— NIGHTHAWK

Sad demonstration

The hype for Stanley Clarke's third album, **School Days** (Nemporor), is all that befits this jazz-rock superstar. Ads in all the trades, a push on the rock-oriented tracks — but, after all is said and done, the album is a sad demonstration of how a brilliant technician of the bass has become carried away with his rising star.

Once again the album is characterized by super-tone production (thanks to Ken Scott of Supertramp fame); turn it up loud, and it really does have an electric cathedral atmosphere. The playing is filled with technical resources: Clarke knows how to get a lot of different sounds from the bass — electrified, outfitted with gadgetry or just plain acoustic — and the likes of John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham and George Duke (other reigning jazz-rock royalty) contribute equally stellar instrumentation.

However, the apocalyptic production is but a smokescreen for amazingly empty compositions. Clarke's mini-opus' are keyed on a simple riff — which would ordinarily sound good if used within a larger whole — but the repetitive dilly-dallying of electronic paraphernalia is not enough to sustain the album. Clarke is just not saying very much, and no amount of technique will hide the fact. This is background muzak for compressed environments, which is why Clarke can be considered a hype artist and not a serious musician.

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Meanwhile, two veteran rhythm and blues aces, The Staples Singers and Curtis Mayfield, have teamed up for the former's **Pass It On** (Warner Bros.).

This is an out-and-out sex album for the formerly heavy gospel group, but with Mayfield's impeccable production — so refined yet so raw — the project comes across with taste and savvy.

Mayfield has adapted his own sweet, mellow vocal style to the Staples' brand of gospel. The synthesis is achieved delicately, as voices blend unobtrusively with the lace of funky instrumentation, led by Mayfield's guitar (he wrote all the songs, too) and the bongos of Master Henry Gibson. A fine album that proves that a R & B album can be expressive by not slipping into disco.

— JUAN RODRIGUEZ

L.A. country vein

Rockin' Chair (Reprise), the new album by Jonathon Edwards, has the Stardust Cowboy teamed up with the producer (Brian Ahern) and musicians (including James Burton, Glen Hardin, Herb Pederson) responsible for Emmylou Harris's two excellent albums.

The resulting album isn't nearly as good as what Harris has done, but it does make for pleasant, easy-listening in an L.A. country vein.

Although the production and playing is flawless throughout the album, there is a nagging feeling that what is being created is something other than pleasant, easy-listening music.

The one real standout song is Willie P. Bennett's White Line. "Standing by a midnight highway/Excuse me sir are you going my way?/ You know that could have been me you're listening to on your radio/ I could have been warm inside of some place/ Instead of standing here in the snow." The song could easily be an anthem for all struggling musicians.

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Jimmy Rabbitt & Renegade (Capitol) is the debut album by Jimmy Rabbitt, a former L.A. and Dallas deejay who has turned his talents to "outlaw country music." The producer of the album is Waylon Jennings, King of the Outlaws.

Rabbitt's big radio voice is well suited to this kind of music. He starts out with Lee Clayton's Ladies Love Outlaws, the unofficial anthem of progressive country music and moves on to such songs as David Allan Coe's Cocaine Carolina and his own Half A Pair.

Rabbitt's band, Renegade, provides back-up that is not terribly innovative but does the job.

— MIKE REGENSTREIF

Paul Anka The Painter by Warhol.

Anka collects a Warhol to grace new record jacket

Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez

Paul Anka was searching for an escaped pet hampster in the basement of his home in Sun Valley when the reporter telephoned to ask the composer-performer about his concert here at the Forum on Monday night.

"Sorry I'm a little late," Anka said cheerfully. In his 36th and most successful year, Anka is basking in the glow of a new "mature" record *The Painter* with cover art by none other than Andy Warhol.

How, asked the reporter in rainy Montreal to the Ottawa-born superstar in Nevada, did he and the famed pop artist get together?

"Well, I've been into contemporary art for a long time," said the star celebrating his 20th anniversary as a recording hitmaker. "I've been collecting for several years.

"At one point I realized that I wanted a Warhol. Of course, I've known Andy for several years and we got together on something that would reflect the different nature of *The Painter*. It's the first time I really wanted to put out a complete album, to try something away from just stringing together a few Top 40 format songs — not that I dislike the earlier stuff. I think this is a more expansive work lyrically. It took me four months alone for the recording."

The confidence was virtually ringing over the long distance line — but, then, confidence is what has always made Anka a mover. As his authorized "bio" says, "At 15, Anka turned unrequited love for an older woman of 19 into a gold mine."

Diana propelled the teen-aged singer from his father's restaurant in Ottawa and on to the hit parade; *Diana*'s 8.5 million sales (and still counting) make it the number two record of all-time (next to Bing Crosby's White Christmas).

After the initial string of hits (Put Your Head On My Shoulder, etc.), Anka, unlike the other early pop stars who faded away and died off, went "legit" — the first singer under 21 to headline at the Copacabana in New York. More importantly, he staked a claim as a song-writer, penning *My Way* for Sinatra, *She's A Lady* for Tom Jones and many countrypop songs. His theme for the *Tonight Show* television show nets him over $100,000 yearly in royalties.

Thus, when he returned the hit parade in the early 1970s, with the controversial "pro-life" single, *Having My Baby*, it was merely a tiny step to regain his visibility as a recording star. He still has a lot of respect for those early years, however.

"We were really pioneers," Anka reflected from Sun Valley.

"We had to break the ground, we had to fight for everything we could get. The rejections were many, and a lot of the stars back then are lucky to be playing in a bar today. "I have a strong feeling for those years when I think of them."

Some people inside the business will tell you that no one, except Elton John, has made more money from music as Anka. *Having My Baby* was the icing on the cake, and aroused as much passion as *Diana* did 17 years earlier.

"Hey, I'm a believer in the individual right," he intoned. "But what happened was the song became a vehicle for everybody to adopt a cause. That's why they started to call it sexist — but I knew the meaning of the song, it's not as if I had to put out a four-page pamphlet to explain what the song was about. Lookit, I could write a song expressing the opposite — Killin' Our Baby. But I wrote "what a lovely way to say you're thinking of me'; we should realize that men have equatable feelings as women do, men can't be intimidated into a particular group."

Anka enflamed the feelings of his countrymen 18 months ago when he flew to Toronto to host the first televised version of the Juno Awards (the Candian "Grammy"). Some found him too "vulgar", "loose" in his patter. What did Anka find wrong with the Canadian industry?

"We all know what's wrong with Canada, those of us who have lived through the paranoia of living in a small market next to a huge market. Unfortunately, what happens here is that you get into the politics of the business and it tends to be confining. When I arrived to host the show, I knew I had to save my self from the presentation."

Anka will have things his way at the Forum on Monday, complete with his own co-star "discovery" Odia Coates and the Paul Anka Orchestra under the direction of Johnny Harris.

'Greatest dance-actress'

Seymour reaps roles

LONDON — (CP) — In two works created for the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden last season, Kenneth MacMillan's *Rituals* and Sir Frederick Ashton's *A Month in the Country*, leading roles were entrusted to Lynn Seymour.

At a series of galas in Hamburg last year the Vancouver-born dancer gave the first performance of an Isadora Duncan study Ashton had composed for her and she performed three more Duncan studies at the Ballet Rambert's 50th anniversary gala.

Seymour's role in the return of the Royal Ballet to New York last spring and her work with the National Ballet of Canada and the American Ballet Theatre offer additional evidence of her full recovery after years of ill health.

Described by Clement Crisp, ballet critic of The Financial Times of London, as "the greatest dance-actress the Royal Ballet has ever known," she was 14 when she was seen by members of the group while on a North American tour and immediately invited to go to London to join the Royal Ballet School."

MacMillan wrote the first of many ballets for her four years later, *The Burrow*, which she performed with the Royal Ballet's touring group together with the traditional classic roles assigned to young principal dancers.

More ballets were created for her. Ashton's *The Two Pigeons* and MacMillan's *The Invitation, Le Baiser de la Fee, Symphony, Romeo and Julie* and *Anastasia*.

In 1966, following the success of *Romeo and Juliet*, MacMillan became director of the Ballet of the Deutsche Oper in Berlin and Seymour joined him as ballerina. They returned to London in 1970, MacMillan as director and she as leading ballerina.

Plagued by illness, she took a year's maternity leave in 1974 for the birth of her third son and made a brilliant return in the title role of *Anastasia*, MacMillan's three-act work about the woman who claimed to be the daughter of the last Russian czar.

Apart from her renewed dancing career, Seymour has embarked on choreography, producing three short pas de deux for workshop performances and collaborating with Robert North, leading dancer of the London Contemporary Dance Company, to devise a series of duets called *Madly Gladly Sadly Badly*.

The latter work, performed by North's company, won a prize offered by the Royal Society of the Arts.

Theatre Notes

By Julia Maskoulis

Light plays launch French season

This week two featherweight productions opened in Montreal French-language theatre to launch the fall season of the Theatre du Nouveau Monde and the Rideau Vert.

TNM's opening show was *Les Rivaux*, or, *The Rivals* by Restoration playwright Richard Sheridan. The Rideau Vert's offering was *The Lion in Winter*, or, *Le lion en hiver*, by American screen-writer/playwright James Goldman.

And now a question? Has anyone at the TNM or Rideau Vert heard that Quebec has its own playwrights?

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A theatre with a more Quebecoise leaning, Jean-Claude Germaine's Theatre d'Aujourd'hui, has extended its current production.

Ma Corriveau by Victor-Levy Beaulieu which was supposed to end Oct. 24 has been extended an extra week and will play until the end of the month.

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Le Centre d'Essaie des Auteurs Dramatiques at the Université de Montreal is premiering a new play.

Marie Pontonnier, Fille du roi by Francois Beaulieu is being presented by a fairly new professional group, Theatre de la Manufacture. Its first show was at Theatre du Quat'Sous last spring.

The play, should have premiered Thursday but didn't as the university was closed for the Canadian Labor Congress' national day of protest.

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The Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Montreal has awarded the Victor-Morin prize for 1976 to the artistic director of Theatre du Quat'Sous.

Paul Buissonneau, a 20-year veteran comedian, actor and director, has been awarded the $1,000-prize and an accompanying medal.

He is the 14th recipient. An official presentation will be made on Oct. 25.

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Three shows are opening this week in English theatre — one professional, one amateur and one semi-pro — and one is coming back.

The Centaur Theatre continues until Nov. 6 with its current production, *The Playboy of the Western World*. Besides that show, one of the more impressive productions at the Centaur in the last couple of years, is another show on the playwright John Synge.

John Synge Comes Next, director Maurice Good's one- man show opens Tuesday for one week only.

The Revue Theatre is opening its season Wednesday with the Broadway comedy, *Norman, Is That You?*

And the Clone Theatre is presenting another one of their funnies at Loyola's F. C. Smith Auditorium — *Chocolate Mousse*. It plays Thursday to Saturday.

On The Job, David Fennario's play, is back from a successful tour of Ontario which began on Sept. 20. For those who missed the show at the Centaur Theatre, both last season and the season before, you can catch this one — the original — at John Abbott College on Oct. 19 and 20. Call 467-6610.

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Royal Alexandra Theatre subscribers are in for what could be a very interesting new season. Ed Mirvish's 37,000-seat theatre in downtown Toronto will be the location for the world premiere of *Scenario*, Jean Anouilh's first play in eight years.

Starring Trevor Howard, handpicked by Anouilh himself for the leading role, the play opens at the Royal Alex Dec. 27. It is the first time the French playwright has had one of his plays to premiere in English.

Following *Scenario* is Liv Ullmann in Eugene O'Neill's classic, *Anna Christie*. (The play, in a different production, will be at the Centaur Theatre in February.)

Toronto, it seems, is going to be used once again as the extended rehearsal base (remember *Chorus Line?*) for the play prior to a Broadway opening in the spring.

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